

REMARKS

Claims 1,3-5, 7-14, 16, 18-27 and 29-35 are pending after this amendment.

Claim Amendments

By this amendment, claim 28 is cancelled and the limitations thereof incorporated into claim 18. The limitations of claims 18 and 29 are combined to result in new claim 30. Various editorial amendments are made in claims 11, 16, 18, 21, 26, 27 and 29. New dependent claims 31-35 are added which correspond to previously-pending dependent claims. No new matter is added by this amendment.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter of claims 4, 5, 7-10, 14, 16, and 26-29. However, applicants note that claims 1, 3, 11-13, 23 and 24 are not rejected over prior art and should also be indicated as being directed to allowable subject matter.

Withdrawal of Rejections under 35 USC 112

Applicants acknowledge with thanks the withdrawal of the prior rejections under 35 USC 112 (paragraphs one and two).

Rejection of Claims 18-22 and 25 under 35 USC 103(a)

Claims 18-22 and 25 stand rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 10179498 in view of Thies et al '317. This rejection respectfully is traversed to the extent deemed to apply to the claims as amended.

In response, claim 18 is amended to include the limitations of allowed claim 28. The rejection is accordingly believed moot and should be withdrawn.

Double Patenting Rejection

Claims 1, 3, 11, 12, 13, 23, and 24 stand rejected on the ground of obviousness-type double patenting. This rejection respectfully is traversed.

In response, applicants submit by separate paper a terminal disclaimer directed to U.S. Patent No. 6,576,604 relied upon by the Examiner.

The rejection is thus moot and should be withdrawn.

New Claims 30-35

New claim 30 is presented which combines the limitations of previous claim 18 and allowed dependent claim 29 (which remains dependent upon amended claim 18). New dependent claims 31-35 are added which correspond to dependent claims 19, 20, 21, 22,

and 25. Claims 30-35 are thus believed to be directed to allowable subject matter.

In view of the above, it is believed that the application is in condition for allowance and an early indication of same is earnestly solicited.

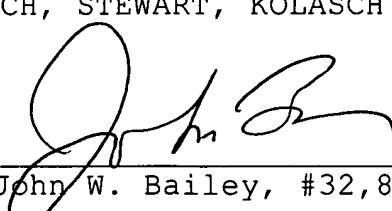
Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact James W. Hellwege (Registration No. 28,808) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly, extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By


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